

# DESIGN MATTERS: A SERVICE-LEARNING COURSE

## ENGAGING URBAN YOUTH IN COMMUNITY REBUILDING

### Purpose

Design Matters is a service-learning course that engages university students with urban teens from TRANSIT ARTS in community design/build projects. Initiated and developed by Assistant Professor Susan Melsop, this course provides experiential learning to OSU students and extends education to an underserved population through collaborative thinking, designing and making. Over the course of the semester, teams of students and urban teens exchange knowledge, share cultural values and collectively build furniture scale artifacts for a new community art center.

### Impact

Based on a praxis of empathic design pedagogy, the course exposes university students to diverse populations, brings design services to socio-economically challenged neighborhoods and invests in the creative capital of youth in Columbus, Ohio through collaborative design/build course work.

Design Matters is an interdepartmental/interdisciplinary course open to undergraduates and graduate students. In its short history,

OHIO STATE COLLEGES/UNITS INVOLVED  
DEPARTMENT OF DESIGN

COMMUNITY PARTNERS INVOLVED  
CENTRAL COMMUNITY HOUSE  
TRANSIT ARTS, AN ARTS-BASED  
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



the course has attracted students from engineering, architecture, landscape architecture, industrial design, visual communications, comparative studies and sociology.

Over a period of three courses, university students and TRANSIT ARTS teens have co-designed and successfully built site-specific permanent installations, ecologically sound furniture, and culturally-inspired landscape elements.

### CONTACT

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